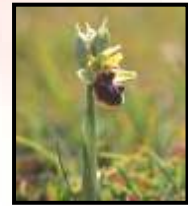


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The Hobbs Boat Inn, Lympsham, Weston Super-mare – Bats

Cliff Walsingham and Co. and Whitbread PLC's planning consultant wished to apply for planning permission to extend The Hobbs Boat Inn in Lympsham, in order to construct a Premier Travel Inn hotel block. This would require building on the existing garden and car park, and the removal of several trees.

Lindsay Carrington Ecological Services were subsequently commissioned to conduct an Extended Phase 1 Habitat survey. The Phase 1 survey concluded that the site was suitable for bats, and therefore further bat surveys were undertaken. The surveys revealed an occasional roost for Common Pipistrelles, within the porch of the Inn.

Bat species are legally protected under Annex IV of the EC Habitats and Species Directive which is transposed into UK law via the Conservation (Natural Habitats & c.) Regulations 1994 (the Habitats Regulations) (as amended). All species of bat are also protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). A report and mitigation strategy was prepared, which enabled the granting of planning permission and subsequently obtaining a Natural England licence to allow development to proceed.

The mitigation involved provision of roosting opportunities including the following:

- Erection of bat boxes on trees around the boundary of the site prior to development;
- Retention of the existing roost within the porch;
- Provision of access opportunities for roosting bats within the new build. This was achieved by creating gaps under the ridge tiles to allow bats to access the roof void. Rough timbers have also been provided along the ridge beam to provide surfaces for bats to cling to.

An ecological watching brief (by a licensed batworker) was also conducted for a day whilst the new roof of the hotel block was tied-in to the section of roof supporting the bat roost. This involved careful dismantling of the roof (soft demolition) whilst checking for bats during October when the roost was least likely to be occupied.

Ongoing monitoring will take place over the next two years and will entail checking the bat boxes for signs of use by bats. The new entrance link and the existing roost will be sealed units and therefore not possible to survey via visual presence / absence inspections. Evening emergence surveys during the summer will therefore be undertaken.

The agreed mitigation strategy is in its final stages of being implemented with the construction nearly complete.